LIFE THAT FOLLOWS LIFE

JOHN BALCOM SHAW

Hannah C. M. Lean.
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By
JOHN BALCOM SHAW

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To my father and two brothers,
the first of the old family circle to
have the vision glorious

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Is There Another Life?

No moaning of the bar; sail forth, strong ship,
Into that gloom which has God's face for a far light.
Not a dirge, but a proud farewell from each fond lip,
And praise, abounding praise, and fame's faint starlight.

Lamping thy tuneful soul to that large noon
Where thou shalt choir with angels. Words of woe
Are for the unfulfilled, not thee, whose moon
Of genius sinks full-orbed, glorious, aglow.

No moaning of the bar; musical drifting
Of Time's waves, turning to the eternal sea,
Death's soft wind all thy gallant canvas lifting,
And Christ thy Pilot to the peace to be.

—Sir Edwin Arnold, on The Death of Tennyson.

I

Is There Another Life?

THERE is nothing more certain in this present life than death. All men, sooner or later, without exception and without discrimination, must die. Next to the question of our origin, and ranking, perhaps, before it in practical interest, is that other momentous question of destiny: What does death mean,—annihilation or promotion, the rising or the setting of the sun, the end or the beginning of life, the entrance upon an unbroken sleep or the pathway through which we pass into an endless existence? Let us attempt to frame an answer to this question.

A distinguished scholar, writing a little

over a year ago in one of our leading monthlies, declared it impossible to give anything like a definite or positive answer to the question. "Man hopes to live again, and he should keep on hoping," he said, "for there could be nothing more unfortunate than the shattering of this aspiration; but to justify the longing, much more to assure one's self of its fulfillment, is a logical impossibility." This, in other words, was his statement: Man is only dreaming; and whether his dreams are to come true or not, they are so delightful that it would be a pity to awaken him. Let him slumber on till death either throws him into an eternal sleep or awakens him to judgment.

Is this the position we are forced to take? Are we merely surmising, dreaming, guessing, when we believe in another life? and is this the nearest we can get to the truth of things? Are there no con-

clusive proofs of immortality? We must agree upon terms before this question is answerable. What kind of a proof are we looking for? If we seek a mathematical or scientific demonstration, we shall of course be disappointed. No spiritual truth is provable in that way. If we are expecting a sensuous attestation—evidence which shall address our physical faculties—we shall also fail in our purpose. Or, if we demand a strictly syllogistic argument in which the reasoning is a chain in which the links fit closely into each other, we can scarcely hope for satisfactory results. The nature of the proof upon which we must depend is corroborative. All that we can hope for outside of revelation is the establishment of a probability, the construction of a reasonable basis upon which the Biblical doctrine of immortality can rest. Three inquiries must be answered regarding this

belief before it will pass muster with logic; and if these can be answered affirmatively, the belief will be found to rest upon a foundation which makes it secure and defensible, and to throw the whole burden of proof upon those who deny rather than upon those who affirm it.

Does immortality lie within the category of the *possible?* is the first of these questions, and we can make short work with it. It is a fact which surely no one will deny, that the act of creation called for greater power than would the act of resuscitation. He who put life into the human body can certainly preserve it after it has left the body. What is there more mysterious than birth? If that supernatural event can take place so constantly about us as to cease to awaken wonder, though it be the most wonderful thing in human life, shall we deny the possibility of a re-birth after death, which involves not

an act of creation, but merely an act of simple preservation?

A physician once told me of a unique experience of his. He was performing a slight operation that required the administration of an anæsthetic, but did not seem to him to demand the presence of a second doctor. The operation was well advanced when he discovered symptoms of collapse. Immediately he examined the pulse, and found that the heart had stopped. He put his ear upon the patient's chest, and could detect no possible signs of breathing. The man to all appearances was dead; but, believing there was at least a possibility of recalling life, he instantly brought into service every known means and method of resuscitation, and after the lapse of a half hour had the immense satisfaction of seeing the patient's lips begin slightly to twitch and the heart give evidence of the faintest flutter;

an hour more, and life was fully restored. Now, if life could leave the body for a few minutes and return, is it inconceivable that the two might be separated for centuries and then be reunited? And if a human physician by the use of material aids and agencies could resuscitate life, is it difficult to believe that the Great Physician who has all power in heaven and on earth can bring life back into the human body at the resurrection? There can be no question, even in the minds of the most skeptical, as to the possibility of immortality.

But is a belief in immortality *reasonable?* Reason is all on its side. The nature of creation makes it reasonable. There must be, there is, a purpose in everything. What purpose would there be in man's creation, if he were made solely for this brief span? The only way in which to reconcile the inequalities and injustices of

human life, the reversed conditions, the abnormal relations that now exist, is to look for another or farther life, in which all this shall be readjusted or reversed. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

The nature of the soul also justifies the belief. Although the soul is now united to the body, it has a life of its own, and in an important sense is independent of it. Is it therefore at all unreasonable to believe that, when that part of our being which is material and belongs exclusively to this material world dies, the other part, which we call the soul and belongs to a totally different sphere—the sphere of the unseen and immaterial—should seek its native air and still continue to exist? No more unreasonable, no less likely, than that a balloon charged with rarer air should instantly upon being released ascend to a higher altitude.

The nature of life is equally in its favour. Life is the most mysterious and subtle thing in the universe, and its escape from the body at death is quite in keeping with its character. Wherever it is found it shows a tendency to continuity from the seed that carefully hides the life-germ away and carries it over to the succeeding season to the traits and tendencies which heredity transmits from one generation to another. Indestructibility is no less strikingly a characteristic of life, whether seen in the successful resistance of plant life to the blight of winter or the posthumous influence that emanates from every human life and cannot be obliterated. Science tells us that while force can be diffused it cannot be destroyed, neither is matter destructible at the hands of man; and we accept both of these statements. Does it not call for far less credulity to believe that so subtle, so mysterious, so divine a thing as life is im-

perishable? Surely, when all these varied considerations are taken into account, the theory of another life seems eminently reasonable.

Is immortality *probable?* That which is reasonable is always more or less probable; but add to the argument from nature, the argument from the character of the soul, and the argument from the genius of life, all of which we have just cited to establish its reasonableness, the argument from instinct, and the probability is as strong as it could be and not become absolute certainty. Immortality is one of the two great instincts of the human heart. All men feel, in different degrees but from a universal intuition, that there is a God and that there is a hereafter. These instincts are not the product of education or tradition, for they may be found where education and tradition have never come; but they are the innate aspiration of universal humanity.

"A solemn murmur of the soul
Tells of the world to be,
As travellers hear the billows roll
Before they reach the sea."

And the existence of this aspiration as fully justifies our belief in that other world as the sensations of hunger and thirst warrant a search for food and water and make man certain that he will find them.

Now, when a belief is possible, reasonable and probable, does it not come close up to the border of certainty? So reasoned Socrates and Plato; so reasoned many of the strongest minds of the race. Need there be, ought there to be, any question of certainty with us, then, when a belief so securely founded as this is found to have the unqualified sanction of Jesus Christ? Of Him who saw farther into the heart of things than any one else the world has seen; whose character is so superior to the character of other men and whose words

were so much wiser than the words of the wisest, that we must believe He came from another sphere and upon dying went back to it again? When standing upon so strong a foundation of possibility, reasonableness and probability as that which immortality builds for us, it produces nothing short of absolute certainty about the other life, to hear this Living One utter such words as these: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you";[1] "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die";[2] "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resur-

[1] John 14 : 1, 2. [2] John 11 : 25.

rection of damnation."[1] And when we hear this same Jesus, the soul of sincerity, turn from us to Martha and say, "Thy brother shall rise again,"[2] and to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,"[3] is it either presumptuous or over-credulous for us to hope, nay, to believe, that if a man die, he shall live again?

How, then, shall we look upon death? Not with foreboding and terror, but, if we are trusting Him who "brought life and immortality to light," with calm assurance and expectation. It shall be a messenger of peace from the King; a chariot let down to take us to glory; a bridge thrown across the black chasm over which we shall pass in safety and triumph into the blessed life. Death always means a physical wrench and therefore its approach gives rise to a shudder. We cannot help dreading the severing of the spirit from the body—we may

[1] John 5 : 28, 29. [2] John 11 : 23. [3] Luke 23 : 43.

even feel a chill when we step down into the river; but Jesus will be there to meet us, and will take us across the cold and drifting tide into the life whereof He has given us so strong an assurance.

Where and What is Heaven?

"To Thy beyond no fear I give;
Because Thou livest, I live.
Unsleeping friend! why should I wake
Troublesome thought to take
For any strange to-morrow? In Thy hand
Days and eternities like flowers expand.

"Odours from blossoming worlds unknown
Across my path are blown;
Thy robes trail hither myrrh and spice
From farthest paradise;
I walk through Thy fair universe with Thee,
And sun me in Thine immortality."

—LUCY LARCOM.

II

Where and What is Heaven?

HOW much we would all give if we could only know where heaven is and what it is like! Tennyson's cry utters a universal longing of the human heart:

> "Ah! Christ were it possible
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we love, that they might tell us
> What and where they be."

One thing we may be certain of: that heaven is an actual locus. The Bible everywhere ascribes to it location; and Jesus who came thence to us, and, presumably, knew more about it than any one who ever spoke to men about the heavenly city, described it as a place, using a word which in-

dicates a definite situation. "I go to prepare a *place* for you," was His promise, and to an unquibbling mind it can have but one meaning. To be sure, it will be a spiritual *locus*, and such a place must differ from an earthly locality,—but in what respect we may not know, and since only temporal terms are used to designate it, we cannot get farther in our conception than the idea such terms convey.

Where can this place be? There are three theories about it. The popular notion, which we will call the Traditional Theory, is that heaven is above us and its antipodes underneath us; but these directions, as we all realize upon recalling the shape of the earth, can be only relative and metaphorical. What may be called the Ethical Theory locates heaven around and about us, and inhabits the very atmosphere that envelops the earth, as well as the spaces beyond, with the spirits of the

departed. Wordsworth voiced this conception in his now memorable words, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," and our own Lowell pressed it yet farther,

> "Not only around our infancy
> Doth heaven with all its splendours lie;
> Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
> We Sinais climb and know it not."

This theory, it is plain to see, is the opposite of that which would make heaven a definite locality.

There is a third conjecture which I venture to call the Astronomical Theory, having the endorsement of such distinguished men as Sir J. W. Dawson, the author of "Nature and the Bible," and Dr. E. F. Burr, of "Ecce Cœlum." This theory places heaven at the centre of the universe. "It is the one spot," writes one of these authors, "that has no motion, but basks in majesty and perfect repose while beholding the whole ponderous materialism

which it ballasts in course of circulation about it."

The objection which naturally suggests itself to this theory is that it puts heaven too far away, the Bible representing it to be very near our earth. Heaven was not far to David when he said at his son's death-bed: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me";[1] it was not far to Stephen, when he looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God; it was not far to Paul when he was caught up into heaven and heard what it was not lawful for him to utter; it was not far to John when on the Isle of Patmos he beheld the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. No, heaven, if we believe our Bibles, is close at hand; if we had spiritual vision we could look away and behold it now. But is it not spirit rather than space that gives it its proximity?

[1] 2 Sam. 12: 23.

The inhabitants of heaven because they are spiritual beings are independent of distance. However far away in material miles it might be, still it would be true that —

> "This life of mortal breath
> Is but a suburb of the life elysian."

The theory to which an increasingly large number seem now to be leaning might be described as the Terrestrial Theory, holding, as it does, that our own earth is to be the final seat of heaven. There are several passages that strongly support this theory. Peter, in his second epistle, records himself as looking, according to promise, for new heavens and a new earth, and John, in the Apocalypse, reports a vision of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Is not our earth beautiful enough to be the abode of the redeemed, and, if sin with all the sorrow and selfishness and sickness which follow in its train were removed from it, could we ask

for a more congenial or desirable place in which to spend eternity?

This, then, is probably as near as we can come in our theories of heaven: that it is now located at the centre of space, the only fixed and tranquil spot in all the universe, and there God's throne may always continue to be. But, since no one sphere would be large enough to accommodate "all who tread the globe" and "are but a handful to the tribes that slumber in its bosom," to say nothing of the dwellers on other planets (if they be indeed inhabited), each sphere, redeemed and regenerated, shall be the heaven of those who formerly lived upon it; and between them and all the other citizens of eternity, upon whatsoever sphere may be their home, there shall be that free, untrammelled communication which is characteristic of a spiritual existence. This, at its best, is only conjecture; but it fulfills the requirements of reason

and the declarations of Scripture in a way which, in the absence of any definite revelation, commends it to our imagination, if not to our faith.

What is heaven? is the second question we have propounded for ourselves, and, fortunately, it is more easily answered than the other. One's first impulse is to turn to the Book of the Revelation in framing one's answer, but the greatest caution must be exercised lest its poetic language prove misleading. I prefer to go back to Christ, and get my conception of that "sweet and blessed country" from Him.

"From heaven He came, of heaven He spoke,
To heaven He led His followers 'way;
Dark clouds of gloomy night He broke,
Unveiling an immortal day."

Jesus said many things about the other world, but there is one utterance of His which is strikingly fundamental and comprehensive. It is the promise He gave to

His disciples at the Last Supper: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."[1] Look sharply into these words and several suggestions are prompt to emerge:

(1) Heaven, as He pictures it, has a surprisingly natural aspect. Christ not only calls it a place, but He speaks of a Father's house and of many mansions there. How familiar are all these terms, and how significant that He should have used them. I remember the sensation produced by the publication, twenty years ago, of the book entitled "The Gates Ajar." It elaborated in an ingenious and beautiful way the idea that what we most enjoy on earth, if it has been innocent and harmless,

[1] John 14: 1, 2.

we shall find in heaven. It even went so far as to transport pianos and games and little children's nursery toys into heaven. The picture it painted may have been extravagantly materialistic, but it made heaven seem very natural and attractive and the picture had its warrant in Christ's own words. John told of pearly gates, golden streets, crowns of jewels, white robes, palms of victory, and harp accompaniments. These appealed to his times, but they do not to ours. We must therefore paint our own pictures of heaven, and it matters not what they are, so long as we put into them the best and purest things in this life. Jesus is our authority for materializing our conceptions of heaven, and we cannot go far wrong when we follow Him.

"What if earth
Be but the shadow of heaven? And things therein
Each to the other like, more than on earth is thought."

(2) Jesus gives heaven a domestic aspect. He refers to it as His Father's house and therefore as home. What a welcome prospect to the Man of Sorrows amid the uncongenialities and severities of His earthly life! And is the outlook less attractive to us sorrowing, troubled men and women? "I shall soon be home now," said a dying saint to me three nights ago, and her face lighted up as she spoke the words. Has such a conception any less power to cheer the living? When Lord Salisbury died Queen Alexandria sent this dainty sentiment to the stricken family:

> "We think at first that home is heaven;
> We learn at last that heaven is home."

Look upon death as a home-going, beloved, and heaven as the Father's house where eternity is to be spent in filial and fraternal association and service, and in-

stead of dreading the dawn of the hereafter, we shall anticipate its approach with ever-increasing eagerness and joy.

"My Father's house has many rooms,
And each is fair.
And some are reached through gathered glooms,
By silent stair.
But He keeps house and makes it home,
Whichever way His children come."

(3) Make sure also to linger upon that word *prepare*, for it speaks of perfect completeness and comfort. No inadequate or inconvenient or unadapted or unequipped place is awaiting us in heaven, but one previously prepared, chosen, set in order, furnished for us by none other than the King Himself who knows all men and will adapt the place to our tastes and temperaments, our likes and preferences, our personal comfort and happiness. Never until we get into the other world shall we

know the full import of that promise, "I go to *prepare a* place for you."

(4) But the highest point in this description was not reached till Jesus uttered its concluding word: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

Garfield once said that a log cabin with Mark Hopkins for a teacher would be a college. What Christian who has had fellowship with Jesus Christ on earth is not prepared to believe that to be anywhere with Him in immediate and loving companionship, would be heaven. But to be in the Father's house with Him—a member of the royal family; to have the perpetual vision of His face and the unveiled chrism of His Spirit; to sit at His feet and have Him impart unto us the wisdom of the ages; to stroll along the streams and through the glades of Paradise hand in hand with Him in high and holy com-

panionship—ah! that will be a joy deeper, broader, higher, fuller, than any other conceivable. Ah! that will be indeed the life "whose throbs are love, whose thrills are song." This picture of heaven, beyond question, is Christ's masterpiece. The longer we gaze into it, the more it discloses to us.

Now, hang beside this greatest picture some of Christ's smaller sketches of heaven, and what a gallery we have—far completer than anything we had supposed. Jesus spoke to the dying thief of Paradise and the mere word calls up a suggestion of luxuriance, beauty, bloom, fragrance and balm one could look upon for hours with unfolding delight. In the Parable of the Talents and elsewhere He promises us rulership in heaven, the regency which purity and goodness must exercise. To the Sadducees He declared that the redeemed are like unto the unfallen angels

of God, purity their delight and service their pastime. To His disciples He compared the citizens of heaven unto little children, therein calling attention to the simple, sincere, docile life of those who inhabit the kingdom above. And in the Parable of the Pounds in which one servant is made ruler over ten cities and another over five, He clearly teaches that there are degrees of rank and stages of development in heaven, the former to be determined by a man's life on earth, the latter by his growth after reaching the other world.

Instead of knowing little of heaven, it would seem as if we knew much. Who that visits this gallery and carefully examines each of these pictures, all sketched or painted by Jesus, the only one who had first knowledge of heaven to give, cannot believe and more than believe the prophet's word: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,

the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"? and is not constrained to accept the poet's estimate? —

> "Take all the pleasures of all the spheres
> And multiply each through endless years,
> One minute of heaven is worth them all."

Recognition in Heaven

"My darling boy, so early snatched away
From arms still seeking thee in empty air,
That thou shouldst come to me I do not pray,
Lest, by thy coming, heaven should be less fair.

"Stay, rather, in perennial flower of youth,
Such as the Master, looking on, must love;
And send to me the Spirit of the truth,
To teach me of the wisdom from above.

"Beckon to guide my thoughts, as stumblingly
They seek the kingdom of the undefiled;
And meet me at its gateway with thy key,—
The unstained spirit of a little child."

—FRANCIS G. PEABODY.

III

Recognition in Heaven

IF we thought we were not to know each other in the other world, heaven would lose much of its attractiveness for us. There are times in life, particularly after death has come into the home and ruthlessly seized some loved one, when we feel we would almost rather be annihilated than live on forever without renewing the relationships of earth. Better no future life, we say, than a life in which recognition is denied. It is the prospect of an unending reunion at death that holds us up through the otherwise overwhelming bereavements of life.

For this reason, it is the utmost satisfaction to believe, as we are justified in doing, that there is no fact regarding the future

life about which we can have a clearer confidence than that of recognition in heaven. The idea of immortality and the idea of recognition after death are so closely allied, so inseparably related, as to be logically dissociable. If we are to live on in another world, our personality—that which makes us what we are, that which is our very self, and distinguishes us from others—must continue; and if our personality continues, our individuality, and therefore our identity, must abide, else that which contributes most to our essential entity, that which gives us our self-consciousness, perishes. It is a psychological truism to say that, if my ego is to exist hereafter, I shall have a self-consciousness; and if I have a self-consciousness, I shall know myself from others and others from myself.

But not only are these two truths of continuity and recognition correlated, but

the arguments which substantiate the one establish the other. Instinct leads us to look for a hereafter; equally does instinct prompt our expectation of a reunion there. Go where you may, this hope, this longing, fires the human breast. Plato felt it; Virgil recorded it; the Hindu read it into his ancient code; the Egyptian buried his dead in the hope of it, and the Indian has ever looked forward to it as one of the assured realities of the Happy Hunting Ground. Shall such an instinct—universal, primitive, dominant—count for nothing? If it is valueless here, it is equally valueless as an argument for immortality.

Reason teaches immortality; reason also teaches recognition. Where were the wisdom of creating these earthly relations, enjoining and encouraging them, building the Christian Church upon them and giving to them the sanctions of the church, if they are simply incidental and tempo-

rary? Where were the Fatherhood of God —its reality, its sincerity—if ties so sacred and tender could be severed by death? God's relation to His Son, and the Son's relation to His Father, are constant and unfluctuating, and for that reason form our ideal and inspiration; but of what service would they be to us, of what influence over us, if our Heavenly Father had denied that same constancy to human fatherhood?

Where were the significance of the judgment, if a man loses his identity at death? We shall all stand before the throne as the same individuals that we were on earth, and receive our rewards or punishments, not as some one else or for some one else, but as and for the same persons or individuals that we were on earth. Why should we keep our identity up to that point, and then, upon being directed to the right or left, suddenly lose it?

Where were the imperishable law of the memory, if recognition is impossible? It will be the exercise of the memory that will awaken the praises of heaven; our delight in meeting Jesus and having communion with the Father will depend largely upon the service of the memory. An immortal soul with no memory of the past, is a contradiction; and if we can remember one thing, why believe that we shall forget another?

Instinct and reason, then, are both with us here and strongly support this universal hope. There are many, however, who, after admitting and feeling the force of both arguments, are more or less influenced contrariwise by certain plausible and much-emphasized objections. Three of these call for attention: —

I. That if the relationships of earth continue in heaven, we shall cling to our loved ones with a partiality and tenacity incom-

patible alike with its happiness and holiness. To this I reply that such partiality God did not account an unholy or unlikely thing when He created the world, for He set the race in families, and commanded man to cleave unto his wife as unto no other; that Jesus feared no ill effects from such partiality when He selected twelve disciples, and plainly made it appear that He had three favourites among these; and what is still more significant, the blessed Trinity finds nothing either inconsistent or unwholesome in entertaining a feeling for each other far closer and dearer than that held for the redeemed. What is not wrong for God, surely could not be for us.

II. A second objection frequently heard is, that since we shall not have corporeal senses with which or by means of which we knew each other on earth, recognition will not be possible. It is not by these

alone, or even chiefly, that we know each other here, but through the inner nature, the mysterious spiritual converse and communication which one soul has with another. Even if this were not the case, every representation or suggestion which the New Testament makes of the resurrection leads us to believe that our glorified bodies are to correspond to these which we now have. The redeemed are represented as seeing, speaking, feeling, hearing, singing, just as men and women do on earth.

III. The strongest objection is, that we could not be happy if we missed loved ones and knew they must be lost. But are not doubt and uncertainty often worse than fact? They would certainly be so in this case. To know that some were saved, though others were lost, would be better than to be in doubt as to whether any were saved, as we would be if recognition were impossible. This theory, moreover, is

against both human and divine experience. Some of our friends are now out of the Kingdom, but it does not make us excruciatingly sad. It would be better for us if it did. God knows all, and yet He is not oppressed by it. What does not destroy our happiness now, with all the fearful consequences of sin lying just ahead of many of our kindred, and what seems never to lessen the Creator's felicity, may not be expected to counteract the joys of the heavenly life. A sense of justice, as well as the spirit of love, will control us; we shall be so lost in the realization of the righteousness of God—so committed to the Saviour's will, so averse to evil, that the punishment of the wicked will be accepted as a matter of fact and approve itself to our sense of right.

The papers only the other day reported the case of a man who was drawn upon a jury that was to try his son. At first he

hesitated to act, but finally yielded and allowed the case to proceed. When the testimony had all been submitted, he retired with his fellow-jurors, and felt himself compelled in the interests of justice to vote with them for his son's conviction. This may be an unusual instance, but instances where a father's love gives place to his justice in dealing with a wayward son may be met with at every turn. Shall we have less equipoise of nature hereafter than we have here?

Our final authority is the Bible, what has it to say upon the subject? It everywhere presupposes recognition after death, and in various ways:

(1) In applying names to the inhabitants of heaven. This it does in the case of the three persons of the Trinity, the angels, and many of the worthies who are represented as among the redeemed. Names are also promised to us—and a name always implies individuality and identity.

(2) In revealing recognition among the members of the Trinity. If they know each other and are known by the inhabitants of heaven, why should not the redeemed who are to be like them have the same means of recognition?

(3) In recording, and thereby endorsing and justifying, the expectation of recognition. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are all represented as desiring to be gathered to their fathers; and their burial is described as if it marked the fulfillment of that desire. David, upon the death of his cherished son, is quoted as saying: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," and the declaration is allowed to stand unchallenged.

(4) But the Bible does more than presuppose recognition—it actually affirms it. It declares that Saul knew Samuel at a glance when the latter came back as if to reprove him; that the three favoured

disciples—probably partly from traditional description and partly from intuition—were quick to identify Moses and Elijah; and Jesus Himself pictured Dives and Lazarus as both recognizing Abraham and knowing each other.

(5) And yet this is not all. The Scriptures, in the words of none other than Jesus, promise heavenly recognition. His assurance to His disciples that He would come again and receive them unto Himself, held out to them the prospect of renewing their relations with Him in the other life. His promise to Mary was: "Thy brother shall rise again,"[1] implying that he was to remain her kindred in the hereafter. His word to the thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,"[2] plainly presupposed the man's ability to recognize Him there.

(6) The Bible goes even farther than

[1] John 11 : 23. [2] Luke 23 : 43.

this—it illustrates or exemplifies recognition. It sets before us the person of the resurrected Christ and bids us behold in Him the first fruits of them that sleep. He was changed after His return from the grave, but His identity was not destroyed. His name, His face, His voice, His hands to the very wound-prints, were the same. As He arose, so we shall also: changed, and yet unchanged; glorified but still recognizable; knowing even as we are known.

All this should give us perfect certitude. Nothing could be more clearly or unalterably established than our belief in future recognition. Confidently may we expect to know each other there. Heaven is to be a place of reunion and death a going home to keep it.

The visions which some of our beloved have had just before leaving us, of dear ones waiting yonder to welcome them, were not, therefore, hallucinations. Ere

their spirits had been released recognition was possible. A friend of mine, upon dying, called his children about him that he might bid them farewell, when, suddenly, as if they were aware of what was transpiring on earth, the members of the family who had preceded him to the spirit-land—the mother, an older son, and two daughters who had died in infancy—seemed to gather around his bed, and were as real to him as the ones who stood before him in the flesh. Turning from one group to the other in his conversation and acting as a sort of medium of communication between them, he passed away with a halo of happiness about his face, amid the salutations of the heavenly group and the farewells of the group that still remained upon the earth. Was he dreaming? I cannot believe that he was. It was a vision as real as it was glorious. May we all have a like experience when we come to die!

Relationships After Death

"Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed state my spirit clings:
I know that God is good.

"The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above;
I know not of His hate,—I know
His goodness and His love.

"I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And He can do no wrong.

"I know not what the future has
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies."

—WHITTIER.

IV

Relationships After Death

THESE questions which we are now considering are all logically connected. When once we become convinced that consciousness survives death, we are eager to know whether or not it will be a self-consciousness, by which we shall be able to recognize ourselves and others from ourselves. And when this inquiry has been answered affirmatively, as we tried to answer it in the previous chapter, we find ourselves face to face with consequences that seem embarrassing and immediately give rise to further questioning.

One of these difficulties—the effect which a failure to find some of our dear ones in heaven would produce—we have already

discussed. This, however, is only one of many embarrassments which it is sometimes thought will follow recognition in the other world. Another serious one is here suggested by the Sadducees, and is doubtless a difficulty which has occurred at one time or another to all of us. If we shall know each other there, will not some complications of relationships prove more or less uncomfortable, and to that extent disturb the peace of heaven? What will the husband do who has had several wives, or the wife who has had several husbands? And how will these several wives and husbands get on together? If the relations of earth are to be perpetuated in heaven, will not the mother-in-law tradition emerge somehow or somewhere? and may we not expect the step-relationships to bring their complications?

The Sadducees felt the force of this objection, and thought they were rearing an

insuperable barrier to a belief in immortality when they pressed it in upon the attention of Jesus.[1] Many people of our day who accept what they denied, are disturbed, though at another point and for another reason, by this same objection, and are prepared to say what from another cause some were found previously to say—that they do not want to know each other in heaven, lest such knowledge might undermine, if not destroy, its happiness.

What is our Saviour's answer to this? "In the resurrectiou they neither marry, nor are given in marriage but are as the angels of God." How brief and simple! Yet how profound and comprehensive! One single sentence sweeps the objection from the field. It is a reply to the specific objection interposed by the Sadducees, and at the same time an answer to the more general and fundamental question which

[1] Matthew 22 : 28. [2] Matthew 22 : 30.

lies back of it. That reply in almost so many words was, that there would be no sexual relations in heaven; which is only another way of saying that the physical, and all that pertains to it or grows out of it, would give place to the spiritual. This does not imply a termination of the tender relations of earth, but their refinement and elevation. We shall continue to love those whom we loved with a pure, true love on earth, but that love will be of a higher and holier type. Precisely the same change will take place in our case, as I understand it, that occurred in the relation of the disciples to Jesus after His resurrection and ascension. They loved Him still; but it was a love no longer prompted by His physical presence or conditioned by their corporeal relations to Him. It was a purely spiritual affection, which existed and expanded independently of all material aids. After the same manner, the carnal,

fleshly side of our earthly relations will disappear at death, and only that which is spiritual and holy remain.

Any other condition than this would be illogical. The sexual relations belong to our animal nature ; and when the spiritual becomes separated from the animal and leaves it behind, as we all believe it will do, it must drop absolutely and forever all that is carnal. Our bodies are to be no longer corporeal, but glorified, and everything that is of the earth earthy will have no place in heaven.

We shall not get at the core of Christ's answer till we recall the reason for sexual relations on earth. Their existence is necessitated by our mortality. Because death is ever depleting the race, birth is needed to preserve it. In an immortal state—a state where no one dies—birth is no longer essential. The angels do not die, and hence they have no need of propaga-

tion. As a quaint theologian has stated: "Where the law of death is abolished, the cause of birth is likewise abolished." This will explain the position taken by Jesus. He did not Himself marry, because He was immortal and belonged to another sphere; He did not bid men follow His example, because they were yet mortal and could not change their sphere till death had ceased to be.

Now, what may we get from this answer? Two specific facts regarding the sequel of the relations formed on earth, and two general facts regarding the distinguishing conditions or characteristics of heaven. The former first.

If the physical were all there is to the relations of earth, Jesus' words would teach us that these would terminate at death; but the physical ties that bind us to each other, as parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, are but the out-

ward reflection or expression of an inner spiritual bond, which unite us as no material relation possibly could. To remove the physical form or manifestation which the relation takes, instead of weakening it, will necessarily strengthen it. With the carnal eliminated, the bond will become purified and sanctified; and our love for our kindred will expand as we grow more like God, until it becomes as holy and spiritual, and therefore as close and tender, as that which binds the Father to the Son or that which binds the Son to the Father. The relations existing between the members of the Trinity are not only warrants for the kindredships among God's creatures, but they are the ideals towards which such kindredships should tend on earth, and to which they must approach in heaven.

A second fact about the continuance of these relationships is here implied by the

words of Jesus: that with the physical element removed—the element which now makes them inferior and sordid—the source of the discomforts and unpleasantnesses which we, with the Sadducees, apprehend, will be removed. It is the corporeal strands running through the cable that make it unequal to the full strain that is sometimes put upon it. All jealousy is carnal in its origin. The misunderstandings and disturbances that here arise among friends and relatives are all due to the conditions which obtain in this life, but are to disappear from the life to come. This is plainly what Jesus was seeking to emphasize. Seven wives of the same man would come face to face with each other after death; but the provocation for jealousy would be left behind upon the earth, and a higher law would reign, that would not only refine and spiritualize former bonds, but bind all together in ties the most sacred and affec-

tionate. Thus a revelation of the nature of the life to come, removes this, as it will remove all objections that seem to follow from a belief in heavenly recognition.

"When the silvery mists have veiled us
From the faces of our own,
Oft we deem their love has failed us,
And we tread our path alone.
We should see them near and truly,
We should trust them day by day—
Neither love nor blame unduly—
If the mists were cleared away.
We shall know as we are known,
Never more to walk alone,
In the dawning of the morning,
When the mists have rolled away."

But the two general facts here revealed about the heavenly life should interest us most. The first of these is, that it will be an immaterial existence—and the meaning of that we are hardly competent to grasp. It is the material character of this life that puts upon us most of our limitations, and

opens the way to about all of our troubles and difficulties. Matter hampers the soul, first caging it in and then constantly taunting and torturing it. Were it not for these physical eyes and ears, we should see much farther and hear much better; were it not for these material bodies, we should travel much faster and learn much quicker. It is the earth that holds us down. Most of the sins of this life are traceable to material allurements. Avarice is love for the things of the world; adultery, drunkenness, jealousy, incontinence, are all either physical propensities or due to physical propensities. Our misconceptions of one another, and of God, are all reducible to material causes. This shall pass away with death, says Jesus. Matter shall not invade Paradise. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven."[1] We shall be spiritual beings, inhabiting a spiritual world; and

[1] 1 Cor. 15: 50.

therein, largely, shall consist our happiness. Who that takes this in, if only the smallest fraction of it, does not find himself often exclaiming:

"For thee, O dear, dear country,
Mine eyes their vigils keep;
For very love, beholding
Thy happy name, they weep.
The mention of thy glory
Is unction to the breast,
And medicine in sickness,
And love, and life, and rest."

Immortality is the other characteristic of that life which Jesus here points out, and the full significance of this is also not ordinarily appreciated. The sense of mortality—liability to die—is ever haunting us. We cannot turn without facing it. We eat because food is necessary to sustain life; we sleep because we would prevent the decay of our powers; we clothe ourselves that our health, which is our

life, may be the better protected. Death is always on our track, pursuing us, the business of life being to keep out of his way; and, despite vigilance and resistance the strongest and most continuous, he has but to will and our dear ones slip away; he has but to lift his hand and we fall before him.

Think of it, there is not a building in this town that is not an old mortality shop, from yonder hospital where death is being fought to one's private residence reared for shelter; from the undertaker's shop to the corner grocery stocked with means of subsistence. There shall be an end of this in heaven, says Jesus. Death shall have been defeated and therefore birth shall be superseded. Life—immortal, eternal, perennial—shall reign; and all the ravages of mortality—pain, disease, hunger, separation, sorrow and crying—shall cease. The tree of life shall be in the midst of the gar-

den, and the leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations.

"Forever with the Lord !
So, Jesus, let it be.
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality.

"And, when my latest breath
Shall burst these bonds in twain,
By death I shall escape from death
And life eternal gain."

The First Five Minutes After Death

"My bark is wafted to the strand
By breath divine;
And on the helm there rests a hand
Other than mine.

"One who has known in storms to sail,
I have on board;
Above the raging of the gale
I hear my Lord.

"Safe to the land—safe to the land!
The end is this;
And then with Him go hand in hand,
Far into bliss."

—DEAN ALFORD.

V

The First Five Minutes After Death

SOME years ago, Canon Henry P. Liddon, then the acknowledged leader of the English pulpit, told an incident in St. Paul's Cathedral which suggested the title of the present chapter. A retired captain of the British army, fond of relating his world-wide experiences, was describing, one day, to a group of intent listeners some of his adventures when, suddenly stopping in the midst of his story, he exclaimed: "But gentlemen, wonderful as all this may seem, I am expecting soon to see something yet more wonderful." Surprised at his exclamation, for he was a man of threescore and ten and,

having been retired from active service, his travelling days were passed, they asked him, when? Pausing a few moments, he replied with emotion: "During the first five minutes after death."

If I had been among the captain's group of friends that day, I doubtless would have objected to his division of eternity into minutes; but no such objection would I now interpose after the maturer reflection his answer has awakened. It is impossible for us to think or speak of the other world save in the terms of earth. When you tell me that heaven is an estate and not a place, I have to confess that I do not catch your meaning. As I cannot apprehend God except I think of Him in the form of a man, so I cannot frame any conception of heaven without giving it a temporal basis of comparison. Will any one say that the mother was wrong who, having been asked by her little son if

children would play games in heaven, answered, "Yes, my lad, the games you like best here God will provide for you there"?

Many years have passed since this incident took place, and both the captain and the canon have entered the great hereafter. Suppose we could now interrogate them about their first five minutes after death, what, think you, would they have to tell us? Contrary to your expectation, perhaps, their answer it is not difficult for us to surmise, and it will be neither a human guess nor the bald product of the imagination. We have the Bible for our guide, and so competent a guide is it that we have no need to fall back upon conjecture or poetic fancy.

Following the leadership of the Bible as we propose to do, we must reject outright the idea of purgatory or anything like unto it. If there is a purgatory, then, of course,

the first five minutes after death and many, many more are spent in pain and penance. But this doctrine, fortunately for mankind, is not scriptural. "Then (at death) shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."[1] If this scripture has any meaning whatever, is it not that the two acts are simultaneous, taking place at one and the same time? What was it Jesus said to the dying thief? "To-day"—not the briefest interim —"shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."[2] What was the prospect that faced Paul as he contemplated death?[3] "To depart and be," not in purgatory, but, "with Jesus."

We shall not yet have our bodies, and until the resurrection shall be disembodied spirits; but our estate, according to the scripture, shall be immediately and finally fixed at death. Those who are saved shall enter at once upon their inheritance; and

[1] Eccles. 12: 7. [2] Luke 23: 43. [3] Phil. 1: 23.

those who are lost shall pass forthwith into perdition.

But if this be the case, when does the judgment occur? It will surely require more than five minutes to administer that, for apart from the questions Jesus must needs propound, there will be at any given time many presenting themselves for judgment. Thousands of people are dying every moment. I hasten to answer that question, for upon its answer hinges all that can be said upon the subject before us. Everywhere the Bible represents the judgment as taking place immediately after the final resurrection. "The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."[1] These are the words of Jesus; and Paul declared on Mars Hill:—"God hath

[1] John 5: 29.

appointed a day in the which He shall judge the world."[1] But while the Bible places the judgment at the end of the world, it speaks of the destinies of men as being settled at their death. Dives and Lazarus on lifting up their eyes in the other world beheld the great gulf already fixed and found it impassable even then.[2] There must, therefore, be a preliminary or informal judgment. Men go by sheer bent of nature to their own place. Nay, before death has claimed them they are judged. "Now is the judgment of this world."[3] Waking up in the other world they realize that they settled their choice of worlds in life and their destiny is fixed beyond recall. Cardinal Newman, though a Roman Catholic, evidently believed this. In his booklet entitled "The Dream of Gerontius," he makes the dying man declare: . . .

[1] Acts 17: 31.
[2] Luke 16: 26.
[3] John 12: 31.

"I ever had believed
That on the moment when the struggling soul
Quitted its world case, forthwith it fell
Under the awful presence of its God,
There to be judged and sent to its own place.
What lets me now from going to my Lord?"

And the angel answers:

"Thou art not let but with extremest speed
Art hurrying to the Just and Holy Judge."

Before the first five minutes have expired, therefore, a man's destiny will have been fixed, and he will have passed out into the estate where he is to spend eternity. Stop a moment to grasp the meaning of this fact. Long before the funeral has been held, before the undertaker is through with his work, nay, before he has been sent for, before the shades have been drawn down and the friends have left the room, before the family have sent off the telegrams, before they have yet realized that you were dead, you will have passed

on into the inheritance to be unchangeably yours throughout eternity. What this will mean if you are lost, I do not want to attempt to picture. I should fail if I tried.

> "O, what eternal horrors hang
> Around the second death!"

I went out to see a man in Sing Sing who had been convicted of murder and was behind the bars for life. As I peered in through the iron grating at his pale, emaciated face, the face of a young man less than thirty, saw the tears begin to drop upon his cheeks, and realized that that little cell six by four was to be his home till death released him, the thought flashed over me: "Bad as this is, it is nothing as compared with an eternal separation from God and heaven." Oh! the hopelessness, the horror, the heart ache, the despair that must come in the first five minutes to one who faces such a future.

And not less difficult is it to picture to

our souls what will be the experiences of the saved those opening moments in heaven. Within that time we shall have had our first vision of Christ. Oh! with what rapture and glory that one experience alone shall crowd the minutes. Within that time our meeting with our loved ones shall take place. What felicity packed into a single minute! And as the glory of the Lord shall surge around us, as the joy of heaven shall leap into our souls, as the shouts of the redeemed like the sound of many waters, shall burst upon our ears—all new and overwhelming experiences—spontaneously, involuntarily, catching up our harps and falling in with the mighty chorus, we shall learn, ere those first five minutes are up, the song of Moses and the Lamb, and shall have full part in the music of heaven. Oh, what must those first five minutes be! To the lost the first introduction to hell—the beginning of remorse

and spiritual death and eternal banishment from God. Well may the impenitent dread them. But to the saved, the first introduction to heaven—glorious revelations, blessed reunions, unspeakable raptures—all begun the instant our eyes go to in death. My friend, how will you spend the first five minutes after death?

"Eternal light! Eternal light
How pure the soul must be,
When placed within Thy searching sight,
It shrinks not, but with calm delight
Can live, and look on Thee.

"The spirits that surround Thy throne
May bear the burning bliss;
But that is surely theirs alone,
Since they have never, never known
A fallen world like this.

"But how shall I, whose native sphere
Is dark, whose mind is dim,
Before the Ineffable appear,
And on my native spirit bear
The uncreated beam?

"There is a way for man to rise
To that sublime abode,—
An offering and a sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies,
An advocate with God.

"These, these prepare as for the sight
Of Holiness above:
The sons of ignorance and night
May dwell in the eternal light,
Through the eternal love."

The Last Five Minutes Before Death

"If I were told that I must die to-morrow,
That the next sun
Which sinks should bear me past all fear and sorrow
For any one,
All the fight fought, all the short journey through,
What should I do?

"I do not think that I should shrink or falter,
But just go on,
Doing my work, nor change nor seek to alter
Aught that is gone;
But rise and move and love and smile and pray
For one more day."

—Susan Coolidge.

VI

The Last Five Minutes Before Death

DR. CYRUS EDSON, then the port physician of New York city, writing a few years ago in the *North American Review*, not at all in the interest of religion but in defense of a purely scientific thesis, made the sweeping statement that ninety-nine and one-half per cent. of all persons dying from ordinary causes are unconscious for a considerable time prior to death. That is to say, for the great majority, for all but less than one out of a hundred, the last five minutes before death are spent in utter unconsciousness.

What prospect does such a scientific statement set before us? Does that not differ according to our state of prepared-

ness for death? To one who has made his peace with God and been pardoned and accepted by Him, what more welcome outlook in the contemplation of dissolution could there possibly be? All things being equal, who would not gladly be spared the pain of the final parting? The Laureate's wish,

> "And may there be no sadness of farewell
> When I embark,"

is surely ours. God grant me when my time has come a sudden death. And if that may not be, may He draw a thick veil across the minutes or hours which I spend in the grapple with death. To see the faces of my loved ones gradually receding from sight and to feel the clasp of their hands get looser and looser till they entirely slip away and are gone, is an experience I cannot even think of without the greatest revulsion of feeling.

And still worse would be a conscious sensation of dissolution. To feel the vital chord snapping, the soul and body drawing apart, the world fading from view, and "shades of the narrow house" closing in upon me—all that is delicate and human within me shrinks from such an ordeal.

Nor can I think of consciously moving up towards the great unknown with a calm and undisturbed soul. Five minutes more, three minutes, only one minute, and my feet shall strike the cold current, my naked spirit face "the uncreated beam," my bark shall have passed the bar and be out upon the boundless sea! O, my God, in Thy mercy deliver me from an experience like that! Rather let me fall into a deep, peaceful sleep, and awake, the transition made, the channel crossed, the harbor reached, and my soul standing before the great white throne awaiting judgment.

This is my feeling as a forgiven child of God, having the witness of His acceptance within my heart and eagerly awaiting the day of His coming. But what of a man whose lamp is without oil and who is not ready for the Bridegroom's appearance? What prospect does an unconscious ending of life bring to him? Picture an impenitent sinner passing into a coma from which he cannot rally. The doctor is holding his pulse, and, as it gets perceptibly fainter and slower, he warns the friends of the fast approaching end. Loved ones are trying to rouse the dying man that they may get but a word of assurance about his soul. A minister has been sent for and is kneeling at the bedside praying. But all avails not to the dying man. He is within five minutes of eternal condemnation and no one can advise him of it. Every tick of the clock, sounding never so loud as when the death

angel is hovering about a room, seems to announce his doom. A few more pendulum swings and his guilty soul must hear its sentence. There is no angel of light waiting to carry him across the dark river. No chariot is let down to lift him into the King's presence. No Christ is standing at the gate to greet him. Except as the evil spirits hover about to claim their prey and convey his soul to the dark domain of their chief, he must face the end alone, alone must he pass through the strait of death out into eternity.

Three years ago I was compelled to see a man whom I had preached to and plead with for a decade face death in this way. His three children, his brothers and sisters, his neighbours and friends stood with me that Sunday night around his bedside begging God to bring him back to consciousness, if but for a moment; but he lay there as if dead to us and to this world but ter-

ribly awake to the world eternal. Why did we beg for him one sensible moment? Because we knew he was moving out into the other world with his sins upon his soul, and when the death angel came a few hours later to bear his spirit into the presence of the Judge of the quick and the dead, our lips were sealed, but each man knew the other's thoughts were about the judgment the poor fellow was meeting. What man can bear to think of spending in a way like this the last five minutes before death?

And yet bad as an unconscious ending of this life would be, the conscious close of an impenitent man's life is even less desirable. To him the farewells of his friends would be inappreciably sadder, because they would be final good-byes; the wrench of dissolution and the uncertainty in the presence of the unknown and untried would also be enhanced, while with

him, in addition to these, there would be the knowledge of swift-approaching doom, a sense of condemnation, the foretokenings of the fate that was awaiting him—and he powerless to avert it all.

Powerless to avert it? It may be that that provokes in you a protest. But why should it? In what condition is a man when within five minutes of death, his body racked with pain, his physical strength at its lowest ebb, his faculties only partially under control, to give intelligent or adequate attention to life's supremest question? Amid the sobs of his friends and the harbingers of dissolution, perhaps in the greatest pain and weakness, a man *in extremes* is neither able nor likely to make his peace with the God whom he has rejected through life and would now turn to only from compulsion. As a great poet has forecast it:

> "And these two pains so counter and so keen,
> The longing for Him when thou seest Him not,
> The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,
> Shall be thy keenest, sharpest purgatory."

Only once in my ministry of eighteen years have I known a man to repent in any positive or earnest way during the last five minutes or the last fifty minutes before death. I have known a few to answer some friend's or minister's questions categorically. I have known many who desired a clergyman to pray for them; but never, save in one instance, have I seen a person step out resolutely and radiantly into the light of God's forgiveness and peace when the Death Angel was at hand bidding the spirit away. There is on record, as if it were meant forever to be a warning to his countrymen, the experience of a noted infidel who sought for the peace of God at death and found it not. Tom Paine had been not only an

unbeliever but a scoffer and a blasphemer, and, one of the few conscious at death, he cried out "with strong crying and tears" to be delivered from the awful guilt which he felt hung upon his soul. But it was too late. Either because his soul was incapable of repentance, or because of the preponderating fear that was upon him, or because he had sinned the sin which is unto death, remorse instead of release was his portion, and his breath left his body, the historian tells us, in one final and awful shriek of commingled pain and dread and thus returned to the God who gave it. Contrast this with the death of Azel Backus who when he realized he was dying asked his physician to help him to his knees and died in the posture as well as the act of prayer. Contrast it with Frances Ridley Havergal's exultant exclamation when the approach of death became known to her: "How beautiful!

It seems too good to be true." Contrast it with the serene and triumphant close of our own Mr. Moody's life, and who of us does not say with all the sincerity of his soul, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his!"[1] Whether conscious or unconscious, whether sudden or looked for, may the close of my life be the certain triumph of God's redeeming grace, and the last five minutes before death ensure for me a glorious five minutes, nay a long glad eternity after death. "Forefancy your death-bed," was Samuel Rutherford's quaint exhortation to the men of his day, and it is as timely now as it was then. What kind of a death-bed, I ask, men and women, will you have, and I hasten to answer my own question: In every case it will exactly correspond to the life that has led up to it.

[1] Numbers 23: 10.

"My God! I know that I must die,
My mortal life is passing hence;
On earth I neither hope nor try
To find a lasting residence;
Then teach me by Thy heavenly grace,
With joy and peace my death to face.

"My God! I know not when I die,
What is the moment or the hour,
How soon the clay may broken lie
How quickly pass away the flower;
Then may Thy child preparèd be
Through time to meet eternity.

"My God! I know not how I die,
For death hath many ways to come;
In dark mysterious agony,
Or gently as in sleep to some;
Just as Thou wilt! If but I be
Forever, blessed Lord, with Thee.

"My gracious Lord when I must die,
Oh, bear my happy soul above,
With Christ, my Lord, eternally,
To share Thy glory and Thy love!
Then comes it right and well to me
When, where and how my death shall be."

How Shall We Get on With Uncongenial and Incompatible People in Heaven?

"When navies are forgotten,
And fleets are useless things,
When the dove shall warm her bosom
Beneath the eagle's wings,

"When memory of battles
At last is strange and old,
When nations have one banner
And creeds have found one fold,

"When the Hand that sprinkles midnight
With its powdered drift of suns
Has hushed this tiny tumult
Of sects and swords and guns,—

"Then Hate's last note of discord
In all God's world shall cease,
And the strenuous life mean service,
And the common goal be peace."

—FREDERIC LAWRENCE KNOWLES.

VII

How Shall We Get on With Uncongenial and Incompatible People in Heaven?

THERE are many excellent people of evident sincerity and undoubted piety whom, do what we may, we cannot bring ourselves to like, and many others who, whether we like them or not, are not easy to get on with. Their chances of heaven seem as good as ours, perhaps better. Therefore, if individuality survives the grave and there is to be recognition in the other world, there is every prospect of our being thrown with them there, and the prospect is not at all encouraging. We have sometimes thought that the heavenly

life would be far less enjoyable if we should find we had to spend eternity in the company of these people. Far from idle or sensational, then, is the question, How shall we get on with uncongenial and incompatible people in heaven?

There is a current story told of Robert Breckenridge and Stuart Robinson, men of some little fame in their day, which closes rather than opens the way out of the difficulty. These two ministers could never agree, but were always in sharp contention in the meetings of their Kentucky Presbytery. One day, when they had had a particularly bitter encounter, the mother of one tenderly remonstrated with her son, asking him pointedly how he ever expected to get on with his fellow presbyter in heaven. "Oh, mother," was his quick retort, "didn't you know that we are to have many mansions there?" The answer savoured of wit but not of truth. The

Father's house will be everything but a monastery or nunnery—a refuge from the uncongenial or a fortress for selfishness. We are compelled to seek a saner and surer way out of the difficulty, and such, I believe, may be found.

While our individualities will remain the same, many, if not all, of our peculiarities and idiosyncrasies must undergo a change. In growing like Christ we shall gradually cast these aside; and, were not this the case, the climate of heaven will so rub down and soften our angles and oddities that these will be minimized and lost sight of in the perfect balance and equipoise that must come with the glorified life. Under the tempering and ameliorating influences of its redeemed society our native uncongeniality and incompatibility will be reduced to its lowest terms.

Nervous specialists insist that much of the irritability and so-called naughtiness of

children is due to an inferior state of health, and according to their theory all children would be easy to govern if they were perfectly well. Push this law on into the other world, and there will be no people there who are hard to get on with. Take sin out of human nature and it is bound to be in any case a lovable thing. Said the sister of one of our recent converts, "I know her conversion is genuine because she is so much easier to get on with at home." If such be the effect of conversion, what may not complete sanctification bring to pass.

Nor must we forget that the transforming process which will take place in others will operate equally within us. Our tastes will be refined, our standards of judgment elevated, our likes and preferences sanctified, our patience perfected, our capacity for appreciation increased, our charitableness enlarged, and our vision of others ex-

tended. We shall know each other, not "in part" as here, but in the entirety of our characters. Not only will a better understanding of each other result, therefore, but a more kindly attitude towards each other. The law of love will be everywhere in operation—there will be no other law—and all will be equally under its sway. Where then will the uncongenialities and incompatibilities of earth be? Surely not in heaven. They will be shut out from the holy place and flourish only in hell.

If Newman Hall found upon drawing nearer, that the ghost he thought he saw in the London fog was his own brother, can we not believe that when at the resurrection the mists have lifted forever from about our humanity, our attitude towards those who have repelled us shall be very different from that we find it impossible to avoid here?

"If we err in human blindness, and forget that we
are dust,
If we miss the law of kindness, when we struggle
to be just,
Snowy wings of peace shall cover,
All the pain that clouds our day,
When the weary watch is over,
And the mists have cleared away.
We shall know as we are known,
Never more to walk alone,
In the dawning of the morning,
When the mists have cleared away."

But, fortunately, we are not dependent upon argument or analogy in attempting to answer this question. The solution has been concretely exhibited to us. Jesus lived the life of heaven on our earth. He was perfectly human, but His humanity was emancipated from the control of sin. How unlikely, and, humanly speaking, how uncongenial and unlovable were the people with whom He had to deal. Peter at times was wholly out of sympathy with Jesus. John's native character being the

opposite of what under Christ's influence it came to be, even the Son of Thunder had nothing in him to attract the Galilean. There was a great gulf between Jesus and Judas. But Christ did not shun any of these men, nor find it uncomfortable to live with them in the closest and most intimate relation. On the contrary it was easy for Him to be patient with them, to be charitable towards their faults, and He grew genuinely fond of them. So fond of them He became that upon returning to the Father He comforted Himself, as well as reassured them, that He would come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He was there they should be also. Death was not to Him a happy release from those He had had to mingle with on earth; it was the gateway through which He should come into yet closer relations with them on earth, and through which they should finally pass to be forever with Him.

If Jesus found no difficulty in getting on with uncongenial and incompatible people when He brought heaven with Him down to our earth, and if such people shall have no power in heaven above to lessen His happiness, though they must be inherently much farther removed from Him than from us, wherein shall our difficulty consist when we awake in His likeness and live wholly in His presence and under His leadership?

Sordid and shallow must our notions of the life immortal be if such a question as this can give us other than a passing concern. And we are surely unfit as yet for heaven if uncongenial and incompatible people cause us any serious discomfort here and now. We cannot, it is true, be fond of all people—affinity is the Creator's function, not ours, at least in this life—but we must love all the brethren with a pure and longsuffering love, else we are un-

worthy of heaven and a long way off from it.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." [1]

[1] 1 John 4 : 20.

The Relation Between the Living and the Dead. Do They Know What We are Doing? Can We Communicate with Them?

"Bright is the ring of words,
When the right man rings them.
Soft is the fall of songs,
When the singer sings them.
Still they are caroled and said,
On wings they are carried,
After the singer is dead,
And the maker buried."

—Robert Louis Stevenson.

VIII

The Relation Between the Living and the Dead. Do They Know What We are Doing? Can We Communicate with Them?

THEN he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they

be persuaded though one rose from the dead." [1]

Jesus here makes explicit, almost categorical, answer to the two questions propounded for our present study. These words are a part of a parable and a parable, as so aptly defined years ago by a little child, is an "earthly story with a heavenly meaning"—its basic characteristic being that it is true to nature and life. Adopting this form of utterance in order to make the truth He would teach regarding the other world the plainer, Jesus represents Dives as not only thinking of his friends on the earth but knowing about them and being concerned for them. He also reports God as denying to Dives the privilege of sending these friends a message of warning. Let us examine these two significant answers separately.

Do those who have passed into the

[1] Luke 16: 17–21.

other world know what their friends on earth are doing? We have Jesus' authority in this parable of Dives and Lazarus, stated in so many words, that they do. Better authority, confessedly, we could not have; for whatever be our thought of Jesus' divinity we must all believe that He had a knowledge of the other world possessed by no one else who ever lived on the earth. If we seek confirmation of His authority, our search is speedily and satisfactorily rewarded. Moses and Elijah were evidently aware of what was taking place on earth during our Lord's lifetime. If not, why did they descend upon Hermon just as Jesus had reached its summit? And how could they have talked intelligently with Him at His transfiguration regarding the decease which He was shortly to accomplish in Jerusalem? And what is said about the repenting sinner? That the inhabitants

of heaven are aware of his course and instantly begin to rejoice over it.

Such knowledge as this would seem eminently reasonable. Space cannot be the barrier to spiritual beings which we find it to be. Their sensibilities are infinitely keener and there must be means and modes of communication possible to them that are unknown to us. And were this not true, if immediate vision of earth is denied them, the angels are constantly passing to and fro between this world and that on their ministering mission. Would not inquiry of them at any time bring information about us? In any case, Christ is surely omniscient, better aware of what is transpiring among us than even we ourselves are. Would He refuse information when sought by those who are one with Him and dwell perpetually in His presence? No, I am forced to believe—I could almost wish it were not so, for it gives one

what is at times an uncomfortable feeling —that the citizens of eternity know what is taking place down here on the earth.

Your loved ones, then, are fully aware at this moment whether you are a saved or an unsaved man. If you are living an immoral life, they are conscious of it and pained by it. If you are serving your generation nobly and well, your life is ascending to them like a sweet-smelling incense.

What a solemn fact this sets before us, and how ought we to be admonished by it. We have the power to lessen or increase the joy of the redeemed. Pain by rights has no place in heaven, but we sometimes actually force it into the hearts of our departed friends. Man, your mother whom you promised on her death-bed you would meet in heaven knows that up to this hour you have broken your promise, and it drops a weight upon her heart. Fancy

her feeling and be ashamed to be its cause. Woman, that fair little one who went away into Immanuel's Land some years ago is watching and waiting for you, and she knows that your steps are taking you farther away from her rather than nearer. Would you like to see the look that it brings into her face? We utter no heresy when we sing the modern gospel song:

> "Bright as the morning, fair as the day,
> Loved ones in glory looking this way.

Some years ago the remarkable conversion of one of our most eminent preachers was described to me by the classmate in whose room it took place. He had been a loose and wayward young man, one of the rakes of the college, with apparently no prospect before him but that of a blighted life. One night when in one of his debauches, he came into this classmate's room and, overcome with feeling, began to sob like a babe. Bewailing his sins and own-

ing the grief which he had given his sainted mother, he dropped into the old-fashioned hymn so popular in revival meetings a half century ago, singing it over and over in maudlin tones:

> "I have a mother in the Promised Land,
> I have a mother in the Promised Land,
> My mother calls me and I must go
> To meet her in the Promised Land."

The Spirit used the hymn then and there to change the man, and, miraculously sobering up, he came over to where his friend was sitting and with the hot tears boiling over upon his cheeks he took his hand, saying: "My mother shall not be kept waiting another minute—I will start out to-night to meet her, and every step I take hereafter, if God will help me, shall bring me nearer to her." Before he had left the room he had found Christ and Christ had found him, and, like Phillips Brooks who used to say the day of his con-

version was the day of his ordination, he at once dedicated himself to the work of the ministry and was thereafter a new man in purpose as well as in character. What joy there would be in heaven if some wayward son who reads this would face about and start out in earnest to meet his father or mother or some other loved one in the Promised Land.

But we have stayed already too long upon the first question, whereas the second, especially just now, is of more popular interest. There have always been those who tried to believe that there was some channel of communication between the inhabitants of the other world and of this, but this belief was not formulated into a cult till a little over a hundred years ago. Then for a time spiritualism, as it was called, attracted wide attention and was popular in many quarters. It had about run itself out, at least among thoughtful

and substantial people, after such exposes as the notorious Diss De Bar case and such investigations as that of the Sebyert Commission, till two eminent psychologists recently began their investigations, when interest in the subject was revived and some degree of credence reëstablished. Professor James of Harvard and Professor Hyslop, until recently of Columbia, have been telling the public of late of their experiments with a medium of rare quality, as they think, one Mrs. Piper of Boston. Professor Hyslop's last book reports his experiments and makes it plain that Mrs. Piper baffles both himself and Professor James. They do not declare that her seances prove that there is communication between the two worlds, but they confess themselves so impressed by what she returns to them that they regard it an open question. These men are scientific, and we can only hope that they may continue

their investigations until they can give us trustworthy conclusions. Meanwhile, I am inclined to be little impressed by all that the spiritualists, encouraged by the attention their cult is getting, tell us about their communication with departed friends, and to regard it as a phase of hypnotism or mind reading. If it be not some such translation of our own sub-consciousness, how sad and unsatisfactory these communications are. They give us no assurances about departed friends, save that they have obviously deteriorated since their entrance into the spirit-world. They were above such puerile exhibitions as chair-rapping and piano-moving when here among us, and their writing was intelligible and sensible, whereas now it would seem to have neither reason nor purpose. According to the returns which these so-called mediums bring us, immortality must mean insanity or at the best inanity.

I bring the claims and theories of these people up to the bar of Christ's word for judgment, and what little value they might have seemed on the most charitable basis to have at once disappears. Our Lord does not here say in a declaratory sentence that there is no communication between the two worlds, but He does justify the inference that all ordinary communion between the living and the dead is cut off. If they are denied communication with us on the supreme question of life, our souls' eternal welfare, as Jesus explicitly declares they are, would they be allowed communication on any less important or necessary subject? In the face of the uncertainty of outside data and before these words of the parable, I am compelled to believe that there is a great gulf fixed, not only between them, but between us and them.

There is, however, one comforting thought about the departed which we

should never lose sight of. Though we may not converse with them nor enter into actual and physical communication with them, there is a mystical communion of saints in which souls above and souls beneath enter into fellowship with each other, a silent, spiritual intercourse dependent not upon the senses but the inward emotions of the soul. I cannot exchange messages with my friends in glory, but I do enjoy a communion with them which is at once inspiring and chastening in its influence upon me. That little waif in Lady Somerset's orphanage understood it when, upon finishing his wonted prayer, he added, "And God, would you mind giving my mother a kiss for me?"

"He holdeth my hand,
He holdeth thy hand,
And keeps us near."